

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 548

By Yager

A RESOLUTION commemorating the first year the Tennessee General Assembly makes the newly renovated Cordell Hull Building its home.

WHEREAS, prior to the second regular session of the 110th Tennessee General Assembly, the members of the General Assembly and the legislative staff moved their offices to the newly renovated Cordell Hull Building at 425 Fifth Avenue North; and

WHEREAS, the 365,000-square-foot, eleven-story building, which is eligible for listing in the *National Register of Historic Places*, was chosen in part because it could easily accommodate the offices of the General Assembly, which had been housed in separate proximal buildings prior to the move; and

WHEREAS, the history of the Cordell Hull Building begins with Chapter 129 of the Public Acts of 1951, which authorized the issuance of \$5 million in bonds, part of which was to be used for the construction of a state office building to meet the needs of a rapidly expanding Tennessee State government and State executive agencies during the post-war years; and

WHEREAS, the dedication ceremony and laying of the cornerstone for the new \$7.5 million state office building was held on December 5, 1952, with Governor Gordon Browning serving as the principal speaker. A leather-bound copy of the most recent issue of the *Tennessee Blue Book* was placed in a copper box and inserted into the cornerstone; and

WHEREAS, the building, which was designed by the firm Hart and McBryde, was constructed between 1952 and 1954; its stripped-down appearance reflects the influence of contemporary architecture, and the building remains one of the State's finest examples of Streamline Moderne civic architecture, a late iteration of the Art Deco architecture and design

that became dominant after World War II and was based upon new technologies of construction, particularly the use of glass, steel, and reinforced concrete; and

WHEREAS, in an effort to mitigate the building's austere exterior, Puryear Mims, former Vanderbilt sculptor-in-residence, was commissioned to create four statues that were then placed outside the building—three on the west (Capitol) side and one on the east side; the statues represent Tennesseans at home, on the farm, in industry, and at war and are known as Family Group, Mountain Group, TVA Group, and Equestrian Group; and

WHEREAS, the true grandeur of the Cordell Hull Building exists in its interior—the entire building features floor-to-ceiling Tennessee marble, decorative and practical, in public areas and restrooms, some of which is a variety of black marble that no longer exists in the State; and

WHEREAS, Chapter 39 of the Public Acts of 1955 officially named the new state office building in honor of Cordell Hull, one of Tennessee's most distinguished sons and a great statesman of the twentieth century; and

WHEREAS, born in 1871 in what was then Overton County and is now Pickett County, Cordell Hull was a member of the Tennessee House of Representatives for the 48th and 49th General Assemblies (1893-1896); he served in the United States House of Representatives from 1907 until 1921 and from 1923 until 1931, at which time he was elected to the United States Senate; and

WHEREAS, Cordell Hull resigned his U.S. Senate seat in 1933 to become secretary of state under President Franklin Roosevelt, a position he held until 1944, making him the longest-serving secretary of state; and

WHEREAS, Secretary Hull was an essential member of President Roosevelt's administration, particularly during World War II; he received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1945 for his role in establishing the United Nations and has been referred to by many as the Father of the United Nations; and

WHEREAS, once the Cordell Hull Building was ready to receive occupants in 1954, the first to move into the new state office building were the following departments: Department of Education, Railroad and Public Utilities Commission, State Planning Commission, Department

of Personnel, Game and Fish Commission, Conservation Department, Department of Safety, Adjutant General Department, Department of Mental Health, Department of Health, and Department of Children's Services; and

WHEREAS, in 2013, plans for demolishing the Cordell Hull Building were proposed; however, this plan was questioned and challenged by the local community and met with outcry by journalists, historical preservationists, the Metro Historical Commission, Tennessee Preservation Trust, Historic Nashville, Inc., the Tennessee Historical Commission, and the general public. A petition to save the building garnered more than 1,000 signatures, and several state representatives engaged the administration to request a second review of the building to determine viability; and

WHEREAS, that same year, the building was listed on the Tennessee Preservation Trust's Ten in Tennessee, which ranks the ten most endangered historic places in the State; it was also included on Historic Nashville's 2013 list of threatened historic properties; and

WHEREAS, a study conducted by Centric Architecture suggested that the cost incurred by the State would be greater if the Cordell Hull Building were demolished rather than refurbished, thus stalling demolition; in 2015, it was announced that the building would be renovated, a tunnel would be constructed to connect the building to the Capitol, and the General Assembly would move its scattered offices from Legislative Plaza, the War Memorial Building, and the Rachel Jackson Building into the renovated structure; and

WHEREAS, Jim Thompson, David Plummer, Rachael Spangle, and Lauren Comet of Centric Architecture worked tirelessly with the outstanding Cordell Hull Building team, which was composed of individuals from the Tennessee Department of General Services and the General Assembly, Lieutenant Governor Randy McNally, Lieutenant Governor Ron Ramsey, and Speaker Beth Harwell, to transform this important historic building into a modern structure that would facilitate the important work of the General Assembly and serve its needs beyond the next fifty years; and

WHEREAS, the General Assembly drew inspiration for the new building from the design ideals of mid-century federal office buildings and meeting and conference rooms in Washington,

DC; Centric Architecture was asked to perform the work and transformed the building into one that embodies the enduring authority, stature, and dignity of the General Assembly; and

WHEREAS, the Cordell Hull Building is a most fitting edifice, and the move into this historic building marks an exciting new chapter in the history of the Tennessee General Assembly; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED TENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we hereby commemorate the inaugural year of the Tennessee General Assembly making its home in the newly renovated Cordell Hull Building, anticipating much success in the coming years as the General Assembly endeavors to serve the people of the State of Tennessee.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.